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NSC BRIEFING

14 January 1958 25X1

DATE 1-21-80 REVIEWER: [REDACTED]

GUATEMALA (Lung form)

25X1

I. The probable deal [REDACTED] between rightist presidential candidate Ydigoras (who is backed by other wealthy interests) and the Communist-infiltrated Revolutionary party (PR) would increase Ydigoras chances of victory in the 19 January election and the leftists' and Communists' opportunities for gaining influence in the next government.

A. It would convert the election from a three-way race, in which no candidate was expected to receive a majority, into a contest between Ydigoras and the centrist presidential candidate, Lt. Col. Jose Luis Cruz Salazar, until recently Guatemalan ambassador in Washington.

1. US Embassy sees Cruz gaining strength daily, but suffering from serious handicaps: his youth (37), the fact that he is not well known in Guatemala, the unpopularity of some political groups supporting him, and the widespread belief that he is the US candidate.

2. SOME FORMER YDIGORAS SUPPORTERS ARE DEFECTING TO CRUZ. 25X1
B. Leftist leaders urging followers to vote for Ydigoras rather than PR candidate Mendez, [REDACTED]

1. However, Mendez may not be party to the deal, and since his name cannot be removed from printed ballot, he will certainly garner some votes, even if he publicly announces his withdrawal.

State Dept. review completed

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- C. In return, PR is believed to have asked for, and may have been promised by Ydigoras, four cabinet posts, including the key ministry of interior.
 - 1. Ministry of interior controls police and election machinery.
 - D. Alliance apparently dictated by Ydigoras' realization that, by himself, he probably cannot win a majority and on the PR belief that, even if it did win, it would probably not be permitted by the army to govern.
 - 1. Both realize that if no candidate gets majority and election thus goes to congress, the pro-Cruz majority in congress would decide issue.
 - 2. One half of 66 congressional seats are also being contested in election but indecisive presidential election would be decided by old congress.
 - E. The deal is consistent with the objectives of the Communist minority in the PR which believes a try for the presidency now would provoke repression by anti-Communist forces. This group wants PR to concentrate on winning as large a representation in congress as possible and then to consolidate its position for a future bid for full power.
 - F. 1. Communists expected to step up their efforts to gain control of PR.
 - F. Ydigoras may intend to discard any agreement with PR after elections. However, this would be difficult.
- II. Serious violence appears almost inevitable regardless of who wins. Opposing forces are armed and prepared for a fight.

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- A. If center candidate Cruz Salazar wins, Ydigoras and the PR are sure to charge fraud and resort to mob violence in an attempt to upset the results.
 - 1. They were successful in such an effort three months ago when they forced the ouster of the interim Gonzalez regime and the nullification of the 20 October elections.
 - 2. Ydigoras says "civil war" will follow any attempt to steal the election from him and has already taken the public position that victory by Cruz will alone be sufficient evidence of fraud. His followers are being told to converge on the capital after the elections.
 - 3. The PR is also prepared for violence, which may have serious anti-US manifestations.
- B. If Ydigoras wins with PR support, the army may refuse to permit his taking power.
 - 1. Such an attempt by the army would provoke serious reprisals by Ydigoras' and PR street mobs.
- C. Interim President Flores Avendano is believed to have discarded his former policy of neutrality in favor of active but quiet support for Cruz.
 - 1. His support could be decisive.
- D. President Flores speaks confidently of the army's ability and readiness to guarantee the installation of the elected candidate, whom he believes will be Cruz.
 - 1. The army's willingness to use force against the mobs is viewed with some doubt because of the army's refusal to act decisively in similar circumstances last October.